



**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services**

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Michael F. Easley, Governor
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Richard J. Visingardi, Ph.D, Director

November 21, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: North Carolina Association of County Commissioners
County Commission Chairs
County Managers
North Carolina Council of Community Programs
Area Program Board Chairs
Area Program Directors
Legislative Oversight Committee Members
MH/DD/SAS Commission Chair
Consumer/Family Advisory Committee Chairs
Advocacy Organizations and Groups
Provider Organizations
MH/DD/SAS Professional Organizations and Groups
MH/DD/SAS Stakeholder Organizations and Groups
Other MH/DD/SAS Stakeholders

FROM: Richard J. Visingardi, Ph.D.

RE: **COMMUNICATION BULLETIN #004**
Housing Resource
Development and Local
Business Plans

A blue rectangular graphic with a white outline of the state of North Carolina on the right side. The text "State Plan 2002" is in white, and "Communication Bulletin" is in a lighter blue color.

State Plan 2002:Blueprint for Change is an evolving document. Over the next year we will be providing more detailed guidance on particular issues as we work toward our goal of "developing community capacity to genuinely welcome citizens with disabilities." Within this broad mandate there are particular areas where it will be necessary to target resources: staff time, technical expertise and investment to accomplish this goal. Expanding the availability of decent, safe and affordable housing for persons with mental illness, developmental disabilities and/or substance use disorders is one of these areas. This memo is to provide clarification of expectations that the LME role in community housing efforts be specifically addressed in the development of local business plans.

The Plan recognizes the importance of consumer access to safe, decent and affordable housing as an important element in building a successful community based service system. In State Plan: 2002 "**Chapter 4: Responding to the Needs of People with Disabilities**" includes housing/ residential among the **Array of Services for Target Populations (page 52)**. Housing/residential is used again as an example to illustrate the importance of providing consumer choice in building **Qualified Service Provider Networks (page 63)**. While not explicitly listed among the issues that should be addressed in



developing local business plans, the importance of the housing/residential component should be addressed through out the plan and will be a required element in Division review of LME submissions.

- In **Local Business Plan, Section III on Qualified provider network development (pages 15-16)** the required elements should include an assessment of the housing needs of the target populations, an inventory of existing resources, and the gaps that will need to be filled.
- Residential/housing services should be included in the service array discussed in **Section IV Service Management (pages 17-19)**.
- In **Section X on Collaboration (page 26-28)**, the local business plan should address how, in addition to working with current and potential providers of residential services, the LME will collaborate with affordable housing advocates, providers and developers in their communities as part of their effort to **"identify, build on, develop and manage the local network of informal services and resources necessary to provide the foundation for individualized support and community integration."**

Where our constituents live is not an issue that can be addressed in isolation. It is intricately related to the work we are doing to improve our capacity to provide the depth and range of community based services necessary to support persons with serious cognitive disabilities in the community. The housing needs of MH/DD/SAS consumers, and therefore our housing efforts, must be targeted over a range of housing/residential models. The pure supportive housing model, scattered site, independent units with access to flexible support services tailored to individual needs and preferences is a recognized model of best practice. All of our housing efforts should be directed at providing consumers the opportunity to achieve maximum personal independence whether in supported living arrangements, independent living or by supporting consumers in their own homes. Within the supported housing model the clustering of independent apartments addresses the choice of many to live in proximity to others like themselves, as it maximizes opportunities for peer support and consumer direction of the housing resource. Across disability lines there is also a need for small scale structured settings, not dead end placements, but stable residential options that are designed to provide the opportunity for growth, skill building and transition to more independent living.

Under current funding and reimbursement mechanisms few of these housing options are paid for through Medicaid or Division funding. Consequently, there are few traditional providers who are willing or able to assume the housing role. Assuring availability of community housing will require that, in addition to assuring an adequate provider network, the public MH/DD/SAS service system expand its capacity to support its constituents in accessing and utilizing generic affordable housing resources.

Expanding housing opportunity requires an investment of time and relationship building: first in developing connections with housing providers, both public and private, so as to maximize access to existing resources, and then parlaying these connections into new development. Housing resource development functions would include:

- Collaborating with other disability and affordable housing advocates in efforts to assure that a fair share of public resources are targeted to extremely low income persons with disabilities. This would include participating in the area's Consolidated Planning process and representing the needs of MH/DD/SAS consumers in local the Continuum of Care planning process.
- Creating an inventory of currently available housing resources accessible to consumers, families and service providers.
- Maintaining information on the unmet housing needs of persons served by the LME, prioritizing these needs and developing strategies to address them.

- Developing a positive working relationship with local Public Housing Authorities and Section 8 administrating agencies to improve access and increase the supply of these resources.
- Developing Low Income Housing Tax Credit targeting plans and then supporting the continuing relationship with development management to assure that the units remain available to MH/DD/SAS consumers and the tenants have access to appropriate services.
- Continuing administration of any current HOME or HUD Homeless Assistance grants.
- Developing and maintaining an internal wait list for consumer referrals to housing resources that have referral relationships with the LME.
- Providing local liaison to the development and operations of residential programs including Oxford Houses, 122C Supervised Living, etc.
- Engaging developers/providers as potential partners in housing development and developing a working knowledge of funding sources and how their regulations, income and population targeting, matching requirements, allowable development fees, etc. dictate how they can be combined.
- Providing education to consumers, families and service providers on accessing and maintaining affordable housing: NC Landlord-Tenant and Fair Housing law and negotiating Reasonable Accommodations.

The Division would like to incorporate what has been learned from the experience of the local housing specialists that have been funded through adult mental health. The Local Business Plan should assure that the spectrum of housing needs is included within the community capacity building functions of the LME. The LME may choose to maintain this function within their administrative structure or contract with an existing or newly developed local community non-profit, including generic affordable housing providers and developers that serve the community at large. The activities of housing resource development will not be disability specific, but for the benefit of the target populations. Housing resource development staff will not be providing direct services to consumers but will work with community partners to develop a range of housing/residential capacity within the LME geographic area.

The Division intends to provide leadership on housing resource development within its new structure. In addition to promoting linkages and the exchange of information between LMEs, the Division will provide technical assistance and training on ways to maximize existing housing resources and best practice in developing residential and supportive housing services. Local LME and Division initiatives will coordinate across agency lines, at the state and local level and support DHHS efforts to speak and act collectively in our approach to the affordable housing system for the benefit of extremely low income persons with disabilities.

Questions regarding this correspondence should be directed to Bert Bennett at 919-733-4671 or <Bert.Bennett@ncmail.net>
Thank you.

RJV

cc: Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom
Deputy Secretary Lanier Cansler
Assistant Secretary of Health James Bernstein
DMH/DD/SAS Staff